

# HAIL TO AN AUTOMATIC PITCHER, BASEBALL'S LATEST

Even Babe Ruth Scored Only a Single From Blair's Invention---Umpire Machine Suggested With Colored Lights for Strikes, Fouls, &c.  
---How Sports Are Tending Toward Mechanical Motions

**R**IGHT in the midst of the busiest home run season baseball has ever known Mr. B. F. Blair, an inventor from the Indianapolis bush, steps forward with an automatic baseball pitching machine that is calculated to make the average major league mound artist look like a common back lot soft ball heaver.

Without demanding any sympathy from the fans or asking any favors from the umpire, the contraption can be set up on any field at a moment's notice and deliver the goods. It can retire batsmen faster than they can fall into line to take a swing at the ball. It can shoot 'em across the pan, cut the corners or avoid the plate completely in a series of amazing, perplexing curves.

It doesn't matter what the wind or the weather, how many runners are on the paths or what the scoreboard registers in the visitors' run column. With the proper attention to its inside works and an occasional drop of oil on its firing barrel, it can travel through inning after inning and game after game without the aid of the human hand. It is absolutely oblivious to the sarcastic comments of the stands or the scathing remarks of the opposing team. It is adequately armored to withstand an unpremeditated pop bottle attack, and it can survive any mere word debate without loss of prestige.

## All Batters Look Alike To the New Automatic Pitcher

All batters look alike to the automatic pitcher. Tyrus Raymond Cobb, Rogers Hornsby, George Sherman Ruth and other noted followers of the Long Poke, whose middle names we never knew or have forgotten for the moment, cannot intimidate the machine no matter how many war clubs they swing as they step up to the plate. Their past achievements may be written down on the record books and their present glories may decorate the headlines, but the automaton dips to no hero worship. It treats every one in the same impartial manner.

It was during a preliminary tryout at the Polo Grounds last week that the late star of the Traffic Court, the great Bambino himself, was introduced to the startling contrivance.

"What's that thing?" asked the Babe, as he eyed the apparatus suspiciously.

Mr. Blair, with the aid of a half dozen friendly interpreters, proceeded to explain.

"Huh!" said the Babe. "Let's see what it's got."

It was a severe test for any machine and probably an awful moment for the inventor. The great slugger stood there grinning menacingly, ready to knock the ball out of the lot. He even rubbed his hands in dirt to show what he thought of automatic pitchers in general. Up in the stands, some twenty thousand spectators sat on the edge of their seats and waited for the crash. Most of them were confident that they were going to have a big laugh handed them free without any war tax. They were all set to hoot

the Hoosier and his paraphernalia off the premises. It was a grand day.

To avoid an unpleasant anti-climax we might as well go on and admit that eventually the Babe did get a single. It wasn't much of a single, either. Not a scratch hit, but a long way from being a lusty wallop of the customary Bambino brand.

There were other offerings of the automaton which no stretch of the imagination could convert into a regular hit. The Babe whiffed vigorously and perspired freely. Still he did get the one single.

The experts considered it a great triumph for the automatic pitcher. They shook hands with the inventor, slapped him on the back and told him he was some boy. Mr. Blair smiled broadly and confessed that he was glad to be alive. He knew that he had plotted his curves on the chart according to the proper mathematics and that the technical details were arranged as they should be. But you can never tell about machinery until it actually starts to grind out the finished product.

Mr. Blair is a baseball fan with a mechanical turn of mind. During the last few

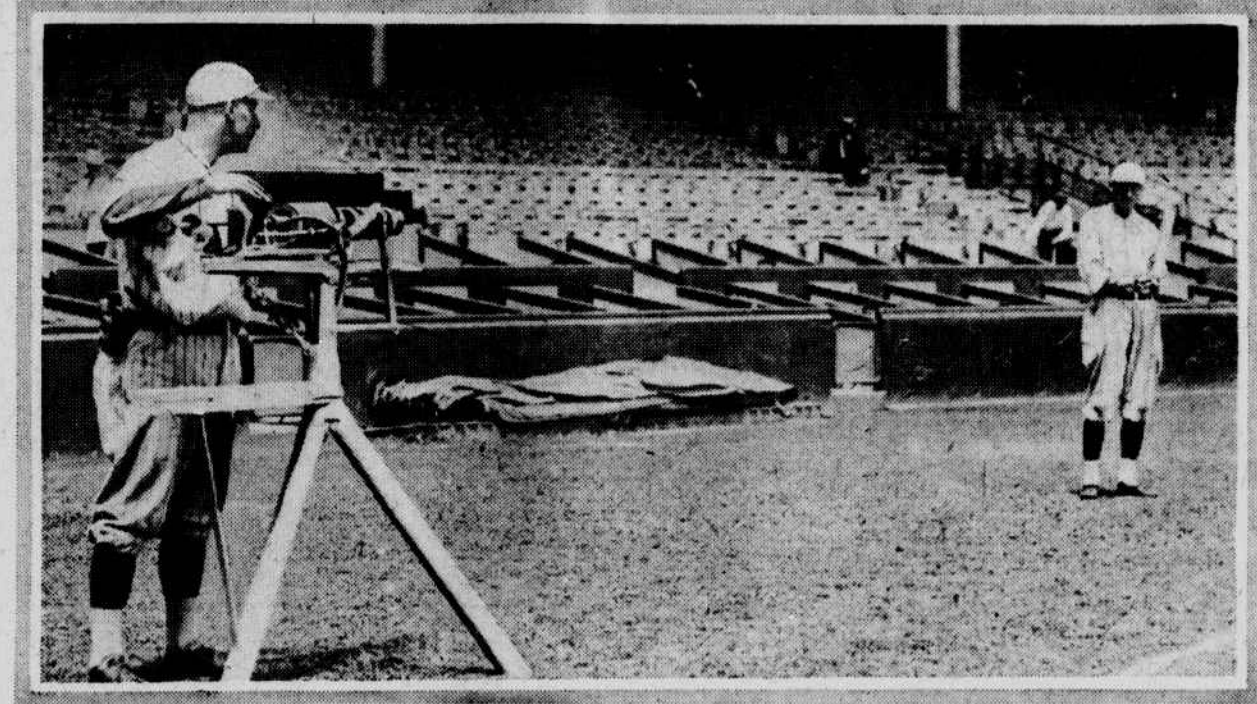
maulings by batters to the complete satisfaction of thousands of enthusiastic citizens. He noted the gradual decline of the moundmen and the rising ranks of the batting order. And, curiously enough for a mere spectator, Mr. Blair's sympathies went out to the flinging end of the argument.

Back in his laboratory, or his workshop, or wherever it is that inventors gather their brains for intensive perambulations, Mr. Blair puzzled for weeks over the tangled situation. Something had to be done to save the overworked pitchers. Day after day they struggled out in the hot sun. When they weren't actually in the box performing any feat the catcher could think up and spell out on his finger tips the manager would have them warming up for an emergency or passing out hot ones for batting practice. It was all wrong, but one can't revolutionize an entire system in a minute, even in a laboratory.

Finally the big idea came—not in a flash, but slowly, cog by cog.

Mr. Blair's original intentions were to perfect a device that would relieve the pitcher of attending morning batting prac-

How the baseball "cannon" looks to the batsman. Babe Ruth failed to get a home run in the try-out. It put 'em across the plate, but lacked speed for Babe to do his best.



Trying out the new mechanical pitcher at the Polo Grounds. Two members of the Yankees are seen demonstrating the machine designed for use in batting practice.

seasons he has watched numerous sluggers wherein pitchers of standing and repute, with children to support and possibly alimony to pay, were subjected to merciless

and other arduous exercises that do not figure conspicuously in the news of the day. He had no thought of robbing the pitcher of an honest living. He strove for

no immortal fame. But he did realize that in dicker with the baseball interests he would have to show them that he had something not only "just as good" but better.

If we were at all conversant with the technical language we should push into the heart of the matter and describe at length all the kinks and cogs of the completed article. We would point to the tiny spring that registers an out drop on the ball, to the piston ring that develops an inshoot, to the contrivance that passes out a moist ball that even the sharpest eyed umpire must fail to detect.

But we aren't very well grounded in our technical training on mechanical things. In fact, the whole business is a closed monkey wrench to us. So we shall pass along with the slight mention that the automatic pitcher resembles in general outline a baby tank, runs like a machine gun and works like Walter Johnson on a hot day.

## For Batting Practice Only

### Is the Inventor's Sole Idea

Positively, it surpasses the inventor's most optimistic dreams. Yet Mr. Blair still clings to the notion that his apparatus should be restricted in its activities to batting practice. He has no wish to see the human equation removed from the daily struggles on the diamonds. He still likes to pick up his morning paper and read that Carl Mays "blew in the ninth" that Babe Marquard passed four men in Cincinnati; that Faber went fourteen innings without yielding a hit and then got himself benched for indulging in impromptu oratory with the umpire.

Just what the general reaction of the public and the players will be to the invention is, of course, too uncertain to predict in these days of antebellum surprises.

Some pitchers are already grumbling over the idea and talking of forming a union to eliminate every gear of the whole machine. Mr. Samuel Gompers has expressed himself as ready to cooperate in any movement the ball players may inaugurate. He feels, too, that while no inconvenience will result to the topnotch twirlers the under dog is bound to suffer. The man who can only do hack mound work, the necessary but unspectacular day to day tossing, will find himself out of a job. There is even talk of prosecuting Mr. Blair on the ground that he is doing something or other in restraint of trade.

Other pitchers are all for it. There has been entirely too much clouting of the ball, both before the game and during official operations, to suit them. They are perfectly willing to let some machine, whatever the make, bear the brunt of the blame and a share of the glory. As they figure it, an automatic pitcher can't hurt their averages, and that's all that really counts.

## Public Likes to Tell the Pitcher

### Just How Useless He Appears

As for the batters, they have up to the present moment remained pretty indifferent to the whole proposition. Babe Ruth may have had a word or two of comment that might have been worth jotting down in shorthand, but he hasn't come out in the open and declared himself. The rest have kept their lips sealed. They are ready to cater to any whim of the stands, and if the automatic pitcher is demanded by the populace and qualifies for a position with Judge Landis and the other moguls they are quite willing to step up to the bat and abide by the returns of the official scorer.

The public may or may not respond with enthusiasm to the interpolation of a player who is deaf to catcalls and casual bantering. To some men half the joy of the game is wrapped up in that joyous moment when they feel called upon to stand up ostentatiously and tell the bum in the box how

useful he would be to the team and New York in general if he would retire to the bench. "Take him out!" they yell and take a positive pleasure in watching the victim squirm.

But the world is gradually becoming accustomed to an automatic existence. An automatic restaurant has no difficulty in crowding its doors until not another soul can squeeze into the place. Yet when the plan was originally projected there were many number of persons who insisted that the human equation of the patron and the waitress could not be ignored. They gave the automatic establishments three months to take care of the people who would come out of curiosity, and then, they said, the trade would drift back to the regular places. But things didn't happen that way. Wherever people in sufficient numbers gather to eat there is always an automaton.

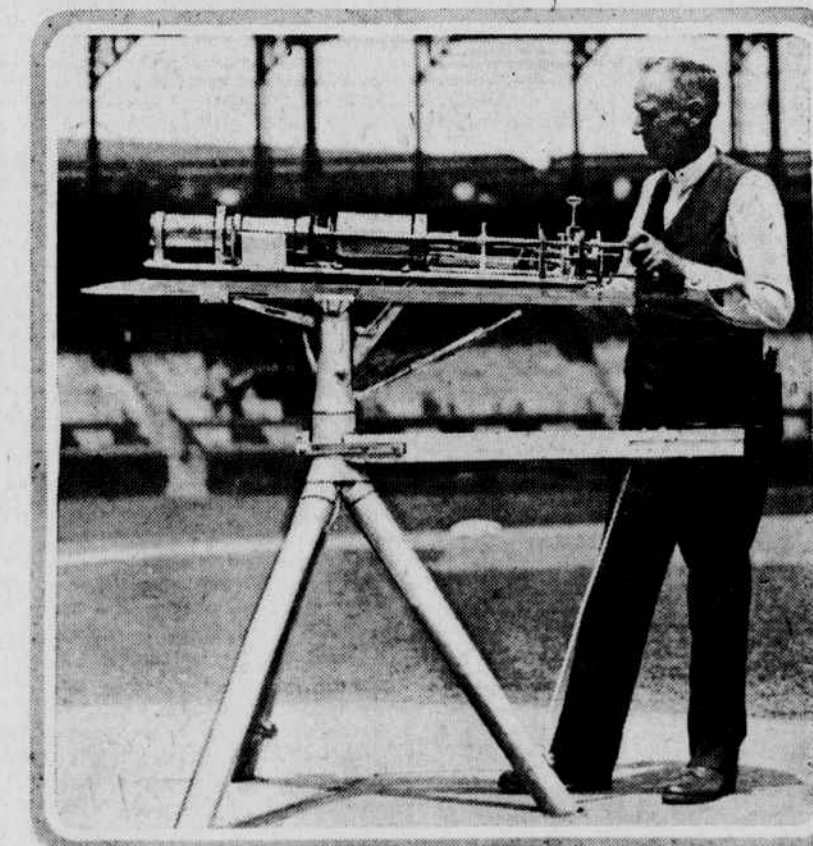
The self-starter for automobiles had scorned in the early days. "Why lose the fun of

streets jobless to consider the matter seriously, and there is some doubt as to how the fans would take any radical steps toward removing all the local color and atmosphere from their favorite pastime.

But we would not be the one to speak of the idea as ridiculous. Only the other night Don Marquis told about the automatic sporting chambers of his Long Island retreat. If an automaton can be invented that has an outside chance of reaching George's chin, why not a machine to scoop up a little baseball and heave it to first?

"Isn't machinery marvelous?" exclaimed the young girl who was being taught the elementary principles of an ice cream freezer.

It is. But let's go slow on the thing until we find out how Mr. Blair's invention acts when it meets up with a world series fixer. There is in the dim background the glaring fiasco



B. L. Blair demonstrating the pitching machine which is his invention. The automatic twirler can be regulated to hurl any kind of ball desired, drop, curve, fast or slow one.

the morning crank?" they asked. And the thrill of having the bus start on compression was brought up by others. But somehow the self-starter idea caught on and spread unquestioned throughout the land.

In sports there has been a determined tendency to reduce the entire industry to an automatic basis—not with real gears and carburetors and such things, but with the introduction of system and professional training that made contests less a matter of luck and more a debate for the experts.

## Sport Fast Being Reduced to a Near Mechanical Basis

The question does occur, however, if the automatic pitcher fell in with the general scheme of attaining perfection on the diamond, would it stop with the mere machine in the box? Wouldn't it proceed along, with boosts from the gallery and fresh ideas from the young bright inventors of the country until the whole game was controlled by an electric switch?

There is much to be said on the subject of automatic umpires. A machine that could successfully register the difference between a ball and a strike might find favor both with the players and the fans.

A red light displayed prominently in some fashion, such as Fifth Avenue traffic towers flash it, might indicate a strike. A yellow light would do for a ball, with a green flash recording a foul. Unless the system were simplified the addition of more colors to indicate "outs" on the baselines might turn the game into a glorified Fourth of July celebration, but in time the nation might get accustomed to it.

Personally, the idea appeals to us as having something on Mr. Blair's original invention. But, having no notion how the wheels go together, we waive all rights to the patent and toss the suggestion out for all takers. Mr. Blair should have his royalty, though.

Momentarily, picture a Yankee-Detroit game where there was no umpire to incur the wrath of Ty Cobb or stir the resentment of bleachers. Without any protests or chances for a decent argument it would hardly be a ball game. Still, some one could always insist that the wires were crossed or that a fuse had blown out.

Automatic fielders and batters are hardly within the range of immediate instalment. Too many men would be tossed on the

# Women Active in Crime Increasing

Continued from Second Page.

of servants or to call on servants and learn the lay of it; then they furnish a plan to the burglar and frequently serve him as lookout while he is perpetrating the burglary. That's a phase of the art that has come up since the war.

"I believe the crime wave that some of our notable policemen say doesn't exist, at least here in New York, is due to the after results of the war and to the same cause is due the number of women who figure either as principals or accessories. The boys come back feeling no desire to work in the old ways and that the world owes them a living and more. They are encouraged in this by the admiration of women who tell them the nation and their fellow citizens have been more than indifferent. Then the men plan a holdup or a forgery and the women think they are justified. They are so strong in this belief that they will go to the length of jeopardizing their own freedom by helping their 'heroes.' It's a matter of false sentiment and false reasoning.

"When a woman goes 'on her own' in crime her motive in most cases is her own cupidity. She wants to dress well, she wants money to spend. In their simplest form these ideas lead to shoplifting. In all cases where kleptomania does not explain the thefts by women from shops the women thieves began to pilfer not from necessity but cupidity. It was so easy to get a piece of silk, a feather, even a silken undergarment by just walking away with it that the woman who started usually ended by trying to steal her whole wardrobe.

"In this connection let me say that shoplifting as a crime is on the increase. Proprietors and managers of great stores are always on guard against it, but occasionally they feel that it has been scotched and they may draw a breath of relief. Then they relax their vigilance and at that moment shoplifting starts again and spreads like an epidemic.

"Women as scouts for crooked gambling games are increasing also, but they are a different class from the shoplifting set. They are more or less connected with the 'shady' class, and if they have never been thieves themselves they are sympathetic toward thieves.

"The badger game and its subsequent blackmailing features is naturally enough the true province of the depraved woman, the woman of the inherited criminal instinct. It isn't made as public as it should be and too often the perpetrator gets off scot free, but it is being practised widely in this town. I know of efforts being made to round up a gang of blackmailers the chief of which is suspected to be a woman. She has a group of women in her employ, it is said, whose methods are too unpleasant to speak of publicly.

"Failure of the courts to adequately punish woman criminals is what is in the way of true reform. Nowadays it is nothing new to find women committing crimes of all sorts, and when they are found out they will lay what they have done to their male associates, who have assured them that even if caught they (the women) will not have to suffer. In the face of the present big increase of woman criminals I still say that

## Females Convicted In New York County

Classification of crimes of which females were convicted in New York county, as appears from the records of the Chief Clerk's Office, during the period 1916 to 1920 inclusive, in General Sessions and Criminal Branch of Supreme Court:

	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	T'.
Abduction.....	2	3	2	0	1	8
Arson.....	0	2	0	0	1	3
Assault.....	16	13	8	7	7	51
Bigamy.....	1	1	2	4	5	13
Brigbery.....	1	1	0	2	0	4
Burglary.....	3	1	1	0	1	6
Conspiracy.....	0	0	0	0	1	1
Criminal C.W.....	0	0	1	1	0	2
Felony (N.C.).....	2	0	1	2	0	5
Forgery.....	4	7	5	8	7	33
Grd. larceny.....	43	22	38	24	29	156
Kidnaping.....	0	0	1	1	0	2
House III fine	1	0	0	0	0	10
Liquor tax.....	0	1	0	1	0	2
Misdemeanor	0	0	0	0	0	0
Misd. (N.C.).....	1	1	0	0	0	2
Perjury.....	0	0	0	2	0	2
Pett. larceny.....	40	42	44	55	40	230
Rec. S. P.....	5	8	6	11	5	35
Robbery.....	1	3	1	1	3	9
Suicide, attpd.....	1	0	0	0	0	1
Unlaw. entry.....	2	3	5	2	3	15
Violating Sec.	0	0	0	0	0	0
2400 P. L.....	0	2	0	0	0	2
Other crimes.....	5	4	2	5	0	16
Totals.....	147	123	110	128	105	622

Crim. C. W., means criminally carrying weapons; Felony N. C., means felony not classified; Misd. N. C., means misdemeanor not classified; Rec. S. P., means criminally receiving stolen property; Unlaw. Entry, means unlawful entry.

they do not tend naturally to crime and that in most instances, under the correct individual training or even in the proper institutions, the majority of these women can be reformed.

"It's easier to convince a woman of the futility of crime than a man. This is due to the fact that crime does not come to her by nature, and to some men it does.

"To judge by facts women have a fear of mixing up in bank robberies, in forgeries or any crime in connection with big money interests. They used to appear frequently in train robberies, going on board as passengers and locating for their 'pals' money and jewels, but this kind of female crime is almost obsolete now.

"The United States mail rather than express trains is their field. Since so many valuables are transported now by rural free delivery women riflers of mail bags and packages are frequent.

"I believe thoroughly in woman jurors, and with anything like a general use of them there will be a great falling off of woman crimes. Since it is possible to reform these women, there is a real gain when one of them gets a reasonable sentence. I have a woman in mind who has served three terms in penitentiary. When she came out the last time she announced that she was done with crooked things forever, and she has made her word good. I have kept track of her and know that she is leading an honest, straightforward life.

"I have known personally but one thor-

ough paced bad woman, one who I believe was born thief and murderer with no possibility of reform, and without a grain of remorse for her crimes. She figured in the celebrated Wyckoff murder case in New Jersey, for which Mont Udell, her paramour, and Johnny McLoughlin are serving life sentences. This woman instigated the murder, insinuated herself into the miser's home as housekeeper, and as soon as she learned where he kept his money hidden sent for the men to kill him.

"This woman, in my opinion, is an exception to her sex. Other women enticed into crime by the men they loved or falling into it by degrees by yielding to their own cupidity have been in every case not hopeless criminals. Many of them have been and all could be, I think, reformed."

Acting District Attorney Jacob H. Banton would have written Thackeray's crime novel "Catherine" as the great Victorian did, that is, without any maudlin sympathy for the woman, yet picturing her degrees of "fall" to the bottomless pit of murder as a natural descent. He reasoned from his own experience of a professional nature with female criminals and decided that "he had learned nothing to convince him that female crime is increasing."

"I will admit," said he, "that it appears in phases that are surprising even to the prosecutor hardened to the variety of crime. For instance, in a case of burglary that involved several odd features and about which there were circumstances indicating that the head which planned it was a man's, when the truth, after devious sifting, came to light the leader was found to be a woman. "From a number of young women criminals whom I have recently examined I would deduce this, that a good many girls grow up without having any moral sense whatever. "The impulse that leads a woman to crime, either against the State or an individual or herself, is money. She wants it, she thinks she needs it, she does a wrong thing to get it. Now, by questioning several who have been brought to book for criminal actions, I find that these young women do not realize what they have done.